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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
Department of Genetics

October 23, 1969

Dr. Arno Motulsky  
Division of Medical Genetics  
University of Washington School of Medicine  
Seattle, Washington

Dear Arno:

This letter is addressed to fellow geneticists.

I have been sitting on the NIMH Advisory Council for the last two years, and have been struck by the very feeble development of behavioral genetics in contrast to other fields.

I do not wish to demean the small number of workers who are pursuing an active if lonely profession. But the dimensions of mental health problems are all out of proportion to the relative orientation of underlying research in genetics and biochemistry, even taking account of difficulties of absolute levels of funding.

The problem has many layers, and I write you now about just one, albeit possibly at the most complex and intractable, namely the interface of psychology and animal and human genetics.


Can you suggest what might be done to improve the communication between these disciplines? Have you considered seeking out opportunities for fruitful collaboration with psychologists and psychiatrists in training and research? (Geneticists, in my view, have always been most productive in such collaborations when they could assimilate the established instruments of existing disciplines. It may not be necessary to start such programs with any single individual who styles himself a "behavior geneticist").

These are not cheerful days for optimism about finding new funds for innovative projects. However, in the long run, quality and imagination will tell, and there are many people at NIMH who are perceptive of the importance as well as the deficits of this area.

Any comments you may have would be most welcome.

You may also get more information about NIMH research and training grants from Dr. Fred Elmajian, Chief of the Biological Sciences Section, Training and Manpower Resources Branch, National Institute of Mental Health, 5454 Wisconsin Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland 20015. Possibly many of you are not aware that these are managed rather independently of NIH with some administrative coordination.

Sincerely yours,

  
Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics